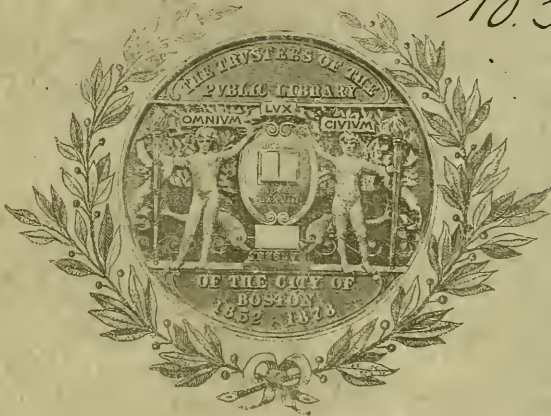


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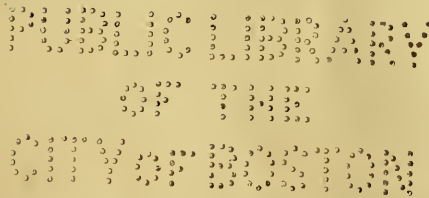
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SECURING BETTER CLASSROOM TEACHING

Observations on the Results of District Conferences Between County Superintendents and the State Department



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Benjamin J. Burris
State Superintendent
Indianapolis



SECURING BETTER CLASSROOM TEACHING

The State Department of Public Instruction recently held twelve District Meetings of County Superintendents throughout the State. The meetings were in session during two days. The first day was given over to visiting and scoring schoolhouses (by use of the standard score-card) and observing recitations both in grade and high schools. The second day was devoted to round table talks on questions of vital concern to the County Superintendent and other questions intended to establish a closer relationship between the office of County Superintendent and the State Department.

IMPORTANCE OF GOOD TEACHING

Society maintains the school to promote its highest social interests and ideals. The school's real worth is measured by the kind of teaching it provides. Fully eighty per cent of the school is the teacher, and the recitation affords the real test of the teacher's ability. All items of school expense are created—schoolhouses are built, equipment purchased, and teachers employed—so that the recitation may function properly. Since so much attaches to this school activity, it is highly pertinent that every school superintendent, principal, and teacher consider with renewed interest the importance of the recitation, more especially at this time when the world over, there is supreme need of greater efficiency not only in the industrial plant but in the school as well.

In the school visitations made during these meetings the State Department was impressed anew that the most fundamental problem connected with the schools is that of improving the recitation, i. e., securing better teaching. During the evening of the day of the visits, the teachers, whose recitations were observed, met with the superintendents, the trustees, and others. The strong and weak points of the recitation were discussed.

Much of the teaching was good but some of it was very poor. In many cases it was evident that the teacher had a fundamental grasp of the subject matter and had made the lesson assignment carefully. In these cases the recitation was so conducted as to achieve good results. Other cases were observed, however, in which it was quite evident the teacher had not prepared carefully the lesson and had been indifferent in making the lesson assignment. Very naturally in such instances the recitation was a failure. Because of these observations and the evils growing more and more into monstrous deformities when the recitation is conducted improperly and when the teaching is poor, we are raising some questions which it is hoped every teacher will consider carefully in making an introspection of her work. Space will not admit extended discussion.

SYSTEMATIC DAILY PREPARATION FOR TEACHING

It is fundamental in the doing of any important piece of work, first, that careful plans be made, and second, that these plans be executed properly. In some fields of effort there is one person to plan and another to execute. This is not true in teaching. The teacher must do both.

To execute well she must first plan well. There is no alternative. To do otherwise is to invite failure. Every teacher should answer for herself these questions:

Do you anticipate your recitation and plan accordingly?

Do you make the lesson assignment definite and hold pupils responsible for getting it and doing the work assigned?

Do you hold a pupil responsible for answering your question or after asking the question do you call upon one pupil, and if he is slow in answering then another and another, thus showing that you do not consider seriously failure to answer your question?

Do you permit the bright pupils to do all the reciting?

Do you have a good reason for the question asked?

Do you get in the way of your pupils by talking too much yourself?

Do you speak in low and moderate tones?

Do you plan your questions carefully?

Do you make your questions simple, direct, and clear?

Do your questions stimulate thought?

Do you ask as few questions as possible in developing important points in the lesson?

Do you repeat pupils' answers?

Do you say "Yes," "All right," or "Yes, that is right"?

One teacher of long experience whom we visited, conducted a good recitation with this exception: He repeated the answers thirty-seven times in the one recitation. Upon being advised of this he said he was not aware of his weakness. He was grateful when his attention was called to it. He did not defend his mistake but readily acknowledged it. His attitude was excellent. There is promise of quick improvement where a teacher shows such an attitude as this.

Do you direct your questions so that every member of the class must give attention?

Do you give a pupil ample time to answer your question—time to think—or do you quickly call on another to answer it?

Do you require your pupils to stand erect when they answer, or do you permit them to lean heavily upon the desk and assume all forms of faulty posture?

Do you make good use of the blackboard for illustrative purposes?

Do you have your pupils use illustrations?

Do you make applications of your points to present-day problems and conditions?

Do you make ample use of maps and charts in the schoolhouse, which are easily transferable from one room to another?

Do you insist upon cleanliness and neatness of the school premises and pupils, and do you bear in mind that the appearance of the teacher is the most potent influence in promoting this desirable end?

These questions are not intended to stress all important matters pertinent to a good recitation. They are merely questions growing out of observations made during these meetings. It is hoped they may be of greatest value when presented under these circumstances.

It is in the recitation that the teacher has her supreme opportunity. If she permits a recitation to close without creating, consciously or otherwise, a greater desire on the part of the pupils for doing well the task assigned, without developing the ability to think more clearly and the power to express themselves more perfectly, without stimulating a tendency toward higher ideals, a broader view of life, a more sincere and earnest effort—the school in a large measure has failed.

READING, A BASIC SCHOOL ART

During the first three years of school work reading is the most important subject in the curriculum. Unless the children are taught during these years to read well, satisfactory work in the other important subjects can not be expected. Yet as a rule in the rural schools and often in the city schools the poorest teaching is done in reading. Interest in securing better reading and other primary work is without doubt the most essential element in developing greater efficiency in the school. More emphasis is needed on primary courses in our teaching training schools and greater interest in this phase of instruction by city and county superintendents, principals, supervisors, and teachers.

THE PRINCIPAL AND HIS TEACHERS

The principal of the consolidated school (and of the district schools of a township) is the vitalizing factor in promoting the efficiency of the school in all its varied work. Not only is he a community leader and worker, but he is especially a leader and counsellor of his teachers. To him they look for inspiring counsel and helpful suggestions in their classroom work. And most of them are in need of just the kind of assistance he is in position to give.

Observations made by the superintendents and members of the State Department during the visits emphasized anew that few principals attain the full possibilities of their work. Some principals have a true conception of their opportunities in guiding and helping teachers, but many are absorbed in routine matters or in general problems alone and seldom see their teachers at work.

The principal quite as truly as the teachers is measured by the effectiveness of the teaching in his school. His work as well as that of the school as a whole stands or falls primarily by the quality of the teaching done. Some of the questions every principal should put to himself are listed here:

Do I maintain a cordial and sympathetic attitude toward my teachers?

Do I meet their questions squarely and give advice in clear and definite terms?

Do I plan my work in such manner as to see at stated intervals the classroom teaching of every teacher?

Do I offer practical and helpful criticism where needed, and speak a word of commendation when merited?

Do I study the plans and methods of younger teachers, seeking where I may to strengthen the weak and encourage the strong?

Do I actually help teachers to teach, to ask questions more effectively, to give attention to individual pupils, to direct their study, to eradicate faulty habits of speech, manner, and dress, to motivate their work, to give it social connections?

Do I permit my teachers who are in need of good models to visit strong teachers elsewhere?

Do I realize fully that more than fifty per cent of the principal's job is to help and encourage his teachers in these ways—that he is paid for supervision quite as much as for general administration?

BETTER TEACHING THROUGH BETTER TRAINING

The State Department again wishes to stress the point that teaching is a highly specialized work, and that it can be performed adequately only by reason of special training. It therefore directs the attention of the teachers to the plans for training teachers while in service.

PLANS FOR TEACHER TRAINING BY EXTENSION SERVICE

All standard normal schools, colleges, and universities in the State may be accredited for teacher training through extension service. Existing standards of work shall apply in respect to—(a) admission requirements, (b) teachers and teaching, (c) curriculum essentials, (d) absence and late entrance, (e) records and reports, (f) size of classes.

I. In the case of monthly meetings, absence is permissible for acceptable causes, illness or late closing of a school term, for not to exceed one day's session without loss of credit; from semi-monthly meetings, two days' absence is permissible, and from weekly meetings, not more than three absences are permissible for acceptable causes.

1. Unit of Credit.—The unit of extension credit shall be the semester hour. The extension semester hour is credit for prepared work represented by one class period of forty-five minutes per week for 16 weeks.

(One semester hour is equal to 1½ term hours.)

(a) Double periods shall give double credit.

(b) Class periods may occur monthly or semi-monthly, instead of weekly, if increased correspondingly in length. (Thus one and a half hours per meeting for eight meetings will give one semester hour's credit; or three hours per meeting will give two semester hours' credit.)

The unit for prepared work is two hours of preparation for each hour of class work.

2. Courses Excluded.—Laboratory, shop, or studio courses, applied arts courses, supervised teaching and drill or "non-prepared" courses, shall be excluded, unless equipment and facilities the full equivalent of those furnished at the institution are provided.

II. *Standards in Correspondence Study*.—Correspondence courses for credit shall be subject to the same conditions and requirements as extension teaching.

1. Correspondence Study Credit.—The basis for college or normal school credit in correspondence study work shall be the same as for extension teaching.

- (a) Lesson Exercises shall be required weekly, the number of such exercises per week determining the number of credit hours to be earned in a course; provided, that a lapse of not to exceed four weeks is permissible for acceptable reasons..
 - (b) Correspondence Courses for one semester hour's credit must be completed within a period of five months after they are begun. Courses for two hours' credit must be completed within a period of nine months; provided, that for acceptable reasons an extension of time for an additional three months is permissible.
 - (c) Not to exceed five semester hours' credit may be earned in any collegiate department by correspondence study.
 - (d) Not to exceed fifty per cent of the credit required for any grade of certificate or diploma may be earned by extension teaching and correspondence teaching; *provided, that the first year's work for any certificate must be completed in residence.*
2. Number of Courses.—It is recommended that teachers in service shall not attempt to carry more than one course by correspondence, but two courses for credit may be carried concurrently with the approval of the local superintendent.


EXTENSION COURSES BASED ON READING CIRCLE STUDIES IN TEACHERS' INSTITUTES

Extension courses, both by extension teaching and correspondence study, based on Teachers' Reading Circle work, may be offered for credit in connection with city and township institutes under the rules and regulations given above for regular extension work.

The regularly adopted Reading Circle Books should be used as required textbooks, but assigned supplementary reading, lectures, and discussions should constitute an essential part of every course.

The courses should follow the manual of Reading Circle courses for extension credit to be prepared by the State Department.

1. *Place in Institute.*—Not more than one-half day of any session of the city and township institutes may be given to such extension course, the other half day being used in discussion of local and educational problems given in the regular institute outline.
2. *Extent of Credit.*—Teachers in service may earn as much as two semester hours' credit in any one of the main trunk lines of Reading Circle work by extension courses during a school year; such credit, when granted by a standard institution, should be transferable on request to another institution.
Not more than two trunk lines of work should be carried concurrently by any one teacher or group of teachers by extension courses.



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